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ABSTRACT

Oral reading, usually designated as unessential, is an effective teaching technique which students enjoy. Through careful preparation, reading to students can help to develop linguistic, cognitive, perceptual, and affective abilities necessary to read well. This can be combined productively with a program of silent, independent reading. An outline of factors affecting reading ability and a table of illustrative questions to help develop the related cognitive, linguistic, perceptual, and affective abilities are included. (AA)

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ORAL READING:

An Approach to Developing Reading Abilities

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ORAL READING: An Approach to Developing Reading Abilities

Frequently, an activity which we designate as unessential or an an enrichment which is included only when there is extra time, after all "required" activities have been completed, proves to be an experience which students enjoy a great deal and simultaneously is a most effective teaching technique. Such seems to be the case[1] with dramatic presentations of written materials - or more conveniently called "Reading-to students".

As teachers of reading, some of our concerns include helping students to:

- enjoy books
- understand main ideas
- infer details
- compare the effect of different literary styles
- recognize humor and satire

Reading-to students (from pre-kindergarten level through graduate school) is an approach which seems to be eminently efficient and enjoyable in helping develop all of these abilities - and many more.

Most of us enjoy being read to. In fact, it is an unusual soul who does not. How can we use this insight to help students develop their reading abilities? For years we have been told that oral reading by students without preparation is not helpful for developing students' reading abilities.

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[1]Empirical research to determine the validity of the theoretical bases described herein is in progress.

However, the role of reading-to students has not been discussed widely. Can reading-to students be helpful in developing their reading abilities? Seemingly yes![2] Let's first analyze the types of abilities necessary to read well (i.e., as an effective, critical adult reader) and then see how we can develop these through oral reading. The requisite abilities can be placed in four categories which will be designated as Linguistic, Cognitive, Perceptual, and Affective[3] . (See Table 1 for specific aspects involved in each area.)

If we agree that the acquisition of the abilities enumerated in Table 1 will encourage the development of mature readers, then how, specifically, can we help develop these skills through reading-to students?

An expressive presentation of materials in print (reading-to students) provides a good reading model by conveying intended meanings through appropriate word groupings. The reading, which will have been prepared in advance, provides the opportunity for the presenter (who need not be the teacher) to carefully read the work, resulting in familiarity with the concepts and the style of language used, critical factors as a model. The pace of the reading should be one which the students can easily follow if they wish, in the text which should be available to them. Of necessity this pace will be slower than a normal speaking pattern, enabling greater

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[2]For research findings, see Carol Chomsky's "Stages of Language Development and Reading Exposure" Harvard Educational Review, 1972, 42 (1), 1-33.

[3]These insights were developed in collaboration with John S. Mayher.

TABLE 1

Preliminary Outline

FACTORS AFFECTING READING ABILITY
Developed by John S. Mayher and Rita S. Brause

I. COGNITIVE[4] (Concepts)

A. Knowledge - recalls information presented

B. Comprehension

1. Translates information into another symbolic form (as paraphrases)

2. Interprets information noting relationships

3. Applies information to other situations

4. Analyzes problems from a variety of perspectives and establishes hypotheses

5. Synthesizes results of hypothesized alternatives

C. Evaluation - based on established criteria (personal criteria or those enumerated by other people)

II. LINGUISTIC (Meanings conveyed by language)

A. Words and Structures

1. Word order (The car was hit by the truck.)

2. Elliptical statements (He asked the girl what to paint.)

3. Connectives (before, for, because, when)

4. Meanings of wrods (ask/tell; infer/imply)

5. Specialized or technical vocabulary (quarks, hadrons)

6. Multiplicity of word meanings (ball, light)

[4] Based on Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain, B.S. Bloom (ed.) New York: David McKay Company, 1956.

7. Multiplicity of sentence meanings (The mayor will ask the police to stop drinking at midnight.)

B. Styles

1. Dialect (Beck in 1937 people was leffing and scrimming...)
2. Figurative language (He is tied up at a meeting.)
3. Symbolic language (Still water runs deep.)
4. Biased presentations (fact/opinion; truth/fiction; understatement/exaggeration)
5. Mood, tone, feelings
6. Subtleties of word choice (thin/skinny/emaciated)
7. Form of discourse (transactional, expressive, poetic[5])

III. PERCEPTUAL (Conventions of Print)

A. Focusing on print

B. Interpreting conventions of print and their relationship to meaning

1. Forms of letters and other symbols
2. Meaning/symbol correspondence
3. Punctuation marks (" "; '; ----; ?; -; [1], etc.)
4. Abbreviations
5. Underlining and italics
6. Left-to-right and top-to-bottom ordering
7. Organization of units of type (words, paragraphs, chapters)

C. Grouping words into phrases

D. Interpreting illustrations

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[5]See James Britton's Language and Learning. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1972.

IV. AFFECTIVE (Emotions of the reader and of other people)[6]

A. Receiving (Attending)

1. Awareness of feelings

2. Willingness to receive these emotions

3. Controlled or selected attention

B. Responding

1. Acquiescence

2. Willingness

3. Satisfaction

C. Valuing

1. Acceptance of a value

2. Preference for a value

3. Commitment

D. Organizing

1. Conceptualization of a value

2. Organization of a personal value system

6, Based on Krathwohl, D.F.; Bloom, B.S. and Masia, B.B. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Affective Domain, McKay, New York, 1964.

dramatization and emphasis in the oral reading. Teacher-selected material, read-to students for discussion of particular concepts or concerns will provide for the group "reading" of a particular work. Student comprehension is ensured through participation in a discussion. (Through student comments and non-verbal feedback, elaboration of ideas and concepts can be provided and questions posed as required.) The students will enjoy this activity and will progress a great deal as well in the areas of linguistic, cognitive, perceptual and affective development.

Now let's relate specifically the abilities enumerated in Table 1 to questions based on the oral reading which will encourage the development of these abilities. Table 2 presents suggested questions based on "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank R. Stockton[7] which might help students to develop their reading abilities through participating in the presentation of a dramatic oral reading of a text.

This approach seems beneficial for both teachers and students for many reasons, some of which are enumerated below:

- Students are exposed to good reading models.
- Students may be presented with material more difficult linguistically, perceptually, and cognitively than they can handle independently.
- Students can experience an individual's pleasure in presenting materials for enjoyment.

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[7]All references are to the text of the story in Adventures in Reading (Classic Edition). New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968.

TABLE 2

QUESTIONS TO HELP DEVELOP READING ABILITIES

COGNITIVE (Concept)	LINGUISTIC (Meanings conveyed by language)	PERCEPTUAL (Conventions of Print)	AFFECTIVE (Emotional Response)
- What happened in the story? - Is it plausible? Why? Why not? - What do you think happened when he opened the door? Why? - Why do you think he opened the door the princess pointed to? - What was the King's idea of justice? Do you agree with it?	- What did the public arena look like? - What would happen if he opened the door with the tiger behind it? - What would happen if he opened the door with the lady behind it? - How did the people feel about the procedure? How do you know? - What does it mean when one is describe as the "apple of his eye? -What is meant by "she had possessed herself of the secret of the two doors? (p.6) - What does self-communing mean?(p.4)	- What does the dash mean in the sentence: Never before had such a case occurred - never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king.(p.6) - Rephrase the following: As the youth advanced into the arena, he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the King. (p.6) - What is the narrator's question at the end of the story? - What doe the "i" mean: "... vast amphi-theater with ..."? (p.4)	- Did you like the King's laws? Why? Do you think everyone would like them? - Did you like the story? - What were the princess' options? - What were the prisoner's options? Were they fair? - What makes something fair?

- Teachers are able to use the same materials with students of varying abilities.
- Teachers can conduct class or group discussions based on common readings, thereby ensuring deeper understanding.
- Teachers can diagnose some of their students' abilities through this approach, noting strengths and limitations in the areas of linguistic, cognitive, affective and perceptual development.
- Teachers can individualize instruction and provide for each student's needs through this approach.

In addition to having a class or group discussion, there could be other activities based on this reading/presentation which would integrate the areas and provide for interaction among the members of the group, such as:

- Acting out the ending as the students project it.
- Role playing a trial for the defense or prosecution of the case.
- Writing stories and plays based on this story, in some aspect (setting, ending, theme, etc.).
- Writing ballads or songs based on this episode - or a similar one.
- Planning a soap opera based on this story.

These suggestions are all based on a conviction that reading-to students can be helpful to them. In fact, one might go so far as to suggest that all assigned or required reading could follow this format.

Moffett[8] suggested that the distinction between thinking ability and reading ability was the ability to identify the symbols as meaning-related items - or the ability to recode from print to sound. Therefore, he concluded that any problem beyond recoding was a thinking problem - not a reading problem. However, evidence is incomplete regarding the relative importance of each of these abilities (linguistic, cognitive, affective, perceptual) in obtaining meaning from the printed page.[9]

The approach suggested in this article is an attempt to provide for the students' simultaneous development in recoding (perceptual development) with understanding concepts (cognitive development), reacting to events (affective development) and understanding language (linguistic development), thereby expanding the requisite abilities beyond cognitive and perceptual ones. To this end also, Moffett suggests a wide variety of exciting activities which foster reading abilities through many varied approaches.

One might inquire, if there is such an emphasis on reading-to, what is the role of silent, independent reading? Another might ask, When might students have the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge developed aurally? A response might suggest that reading silently during class time - for the

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[8]James Moffett. A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, K-13. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1973.

[9]Roy C. O'Donnell, Paper presented at the NCTE Elementary Section Language Arts Conference, Atlanta, Spring, 1976.

student's enjoyment from materials selected individually by the student, as a complementary approach. This would provide the opportunity for individual conferences to help students develop concepts about the world, how language conveys meanings and the conventions of print (thus developing cognitively, perceptually, linguistically and affectively) starting at each individual's present levels of development, based on student self-selected materials. Again, students will enjoy reading when they are able to make their own selections (including magazines and comic books). They will realize the importance of reading by noting the teacher's provision for this activity during a significant portion of the school day - time designated for supervised instruction. The teacher, through an understanding of the requisite abilities for becoming independent critical readers will be able to provide for each student's individual development through frequent conferences and suggested follow-up activities. These combined experiences will benefit the student's developing reading abilities and place learning in a most enjoyable context.